



Memphremagog Basin Water Quality Council

Friday, June 9, 2023 8:00am - 10:00am

Meeting Minutes

Attending: Eric Pope, Sam Mayne, Kerry O'Brien, Patrick Hurley, Meg Carter, Ted Sedell, Ben Copans, Beth Torpey, Tom Bernier, Jesse Noone (voting member for Doug), Gabryel Gianoni, Karen Freeman

Introduction & Public Comments - Beth welcomed the group, including Gabbie the new Memphremagog Watershed Association staff person. There were no public comments.

Member Comments - Patrick asked if members who don't have work plans are getting compensated, Karen replied yes those voting members who are not paid another way get compensated. Eric wondered if compensation was only for meeting time or for document review as well. Ben said there has been a lot of discussion about this, Karen suggested that members could track their time reviewing materials outside of the meetings and if substantial we should discuss funding to help cover.

Meg wondered if the Conflict of Interest question has been adequately addressed. Beth said that the group agreed that members can't vote on their own project, Kerry wondered about a formal policy and Ben noted that DEC has just posted draft COI guidance that aligns with that. Karen said she could draft language and include that on the September agenda to ratify.

Approval April 6th meeting minutes – Motion by Meg, seconded by Ted to approve minutes as drafted. Unanimous vote to approve.

CWSP Program update – Karen mentioned that VHCB will be increasing capacity in the basin by filling the Clean Water Program Director position (search underway) and with the addition of a new part-time administrative person. The templates for the Master Agreement and Task Order for subgrantees have been drafted, the project manager pre-qualification document has been streamlined and will be coming soon with the subcontractor pre-qualification document to follow.

Presentation by CWSP staff – Karen reviewed the project prioritization and selection process and the role of the BWQC. She also talked about the context to consider, including the basin P reduction target and cost effectiveness target. There isn't a lot of data on cost effectiveness and with more projects the real thresholds will emerge. She reviewed the project scoring rubric and thanked Ben, Meg, Patrick and Sam for working as a committee to suggest a scale for assigning the P reduction score. Ben noted that the approach for calculating cost efficiency ties into the average of \$12,500/kg for the basin and is based on a mix of project types. He also noted that since that average was built on projects 4-5 years old, given inflation is probably low. Meg thought the approach played out well with the scoring of the 2 projects for this round. Karen reviewed the co-benefits matrix and felt the applicants did a good job conveying their project benefits relative to our matrix.



She reviewed the available funds and requested amounts, the basin P reductions by sector and the project scoring and staff ranking for the two June projects: Valley Brook in Morgan and LaCross in Westmore. Meg noted that the LaCross application has different numbers than the chart. Karen replied that she had sent out an email to the group on this, but in the future will have applicants revise their application.

Project Presentations – Patrick presented the Valley Brook Phase 1 restoration project (former Farrow Farm) in Morgan. Now owned by the State, this phase of project includes daylighting a buried stream, restoring the barnyard area (will recycle most of barn, VAAFMM funding this piece), reclaim an acre of floodplain, incorporate woody debris, plugging ditches, taking out 9 culverts, rebuild/stabilize streambanks, with Northwoods doing direct seeding of trees and shrubs. He will be asking for more funding next round for the design of Phase 2 which will involve decommissioning a farm road and adding seed/mulch/woody debris. He has construction and stormwater permits, confirmation of wetlands and cultural resources waivers, and the stream alteration permit is in public review. He pointed out that this project was hard to bid accurately so he built in a 50% contingency and the final cost will be less.

Ted asked about the VAST trail resolution, Patrick showed the existing location and where it will be rerouted. Beth asked if the project will reduce sedimentation at the fishing access and if there are any projects down gradient. Patrick responded that it should as the treatments will both trap and prevent sediment movement and that he is talking to landowners at Sucker Brook and Valley Brook confluence. There was discussion on not including the acquisition costs which made sense for this project since the restoration work started after the ownership stage. Including leverage impacts the cost efficiency and Kerry wondered if it is a disincentive to getting leverage by including matching funds in the efficiency calculation.

Motion by Eric, seconded by Meg, to approve the Valley Brook Phase 1 project as submitted. Patrick recused himself. Unanimous approval.

Ted presented the LaCross Farm project on Lake Willoughby in Westmore which involves removing all the dairy infrastructure from the farm, though the owners may still do some haying. Project involves design of an earthen dam removal, stream bypass gully removal, and restoring an old channel back to a functional stream, riparian zone, and floodplain appropriate for its size. He applied for 30% design, but walked the property again yesterday with DEC and has decided that an alternatives analysis is needed. He will redo the application and apply for less funding for a project development project to get more info, including a stream geomorphic assessment, and then decide how to design the project.

Eric mentioned that VTRANS gave the town of Westmore a grant for engineering a larger culvert in this area and there are completing engineered plans which could factor into a new plan for the LaCross project. He will send Ted a copy of the plans. Kerry wondered if the project is not at a stage where the P cost effective can be calculated why we would consider at this early stage. Ben responded that the CWSP funding is an opportunity to get on a project development “conveyor belt” and projects are submitted with the best guess on cost. He pointed out that Karen’s score for



uncertainty reflected this status. Ted will redo the application to be a project development alternatives analysis vs 30% design. Karen suggested that the group could give preliminary approval, contingent on a new application and a final email vote by the BWQC. Eric asked about timeframe, Ted said he could get a new application in the end of July.

Motion by Patrick, second by Eric to approve a revised LaCross project development application, reviewed by the CWSP, with materials back out to the BWQC for final approval done via email. Ted recused himself. Unanimous approval.

Karen asked if there was any more feedback on the scoring, Ben though the co-benefits seemed clear and perhaps a sentence or two about determining the scoring on the other elements would be helpful. Karen said she will do that for the next round. Meg thought the scoring seemed clear and that it will be interesting to see how numbers line up with future applications, and if there will be a lot in middle, or several outliers.

Project pipeline updates – Karen reviewed the proposed schedule for next solicitation round, members confirmed that two weeks is a good amount of time for their review. There was conversation about outreach to lake associations. Beth thought it was a good idea to be in touch with these groups but we need to be clear on what types of projects qualify and Meg suggested they can be on the lookout for projects and partner with pre-qualified groups to do projects.

Meg expressed her interest in having an O&M crew and housing some trained inspectors/verifiers at Northwoods, she will talk more to Karen about possibilities for funding. Kerry said she was concerned about the limited capacity to get projects done in the watershed and the need to find a way to get more trained staff with living wage on the ground, she hoped we can get more creative in developing capacity. Karen mentioned that Great Lakes Fisheries could be a source for workforce development and Ben noted that DEC will be coming out soon with an RFP for a capacity building block grant.

Patrick/Gabbie: MWA Pipeline includes 2 farms in Derby (stream/wetland work that CREP can't fund), Farrow Farm Phase 2 and Binnette and a Clyde River riparian buffer; gully stabilization planting project. Karen asked about developed lands, Patrick mentioned stormwater projects in Barton and Glover but they are not ready yet, maybe later in the year or 2024.

Sam: ECNRCD – He has a stormwater project coming down the pike.

Ted: OCNRCD will be working with Nelson Farms so there will be a number of projects coming.

Functioning Floodplain Training – Ted, Patrick and Meg went to the training, a good tool but doesn't cover our basin yet and we will still need to use the calculator until the GIS layers are available. Patrick mentioned that said that while we don't have the Stream Geomorphic Assessment info we need, partners are still good at finding projects in basin and the size of our basin is not so unwieldy. Ted noted that while we have a handle on rivers, the SGA's haven't been done on small streams/tributaries.



Other Business - Karen noted that the BWQC will be electing chair and Vice Chair in September and she hoped that Beth and Kerry would agree to run for reelection. Anyone interested in serving should let her know. Ben expressed his appreciation to Beth and Kerry and thought that continuity would be helpful for this next year.

Upcoming Trainings:

- June 21st DEC Clean Water Training

Next BWQC meetings:

- September 14th, 9am-11am
- December 19th, 9am-11am

Motion to Adjourn - Meg made a motion to adjourn and Kerry seconded.
Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.